

BERKELEY BOOKMARK

Vol. XXIII, No. III

WWW.BERKELEYLIBRARYFRIENDS.ORG

SEPT. 2024

Love the Library? Vote for it!

As election time edges ever closer, you'll be hearing a lot about countless candidates and multiple measures. We want you to know about Berkeley's Measure because it's darned important.

So, what's Measure X all about?

It is measure on the November ballot that creates a special parcel tax to maintain Berkeley's Public Libraries... it's hours, staff, collections, and services.

Why do we need Measure X?

The original library tax—the Library Relief Act of 1980— has funded the Library's budget for 44 years. That tax

has been increased annually by either the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or by the Personal Income Growth (PIG). As of 2025, the library's budget will have a shortfall because the inflation of the last few years has far outpaced both the CPI and the PIG.

What will Measure X do?

The Measure will be an addition to the City's special library tax. It will raise an additional \$5.6 million dollars that will be added to the Library's budget to maintain the buildings, library hours, staff, and

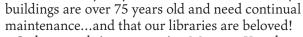
materials. Simply put, it will provide Berkeley's five libraries much needed funds.

What can you do to help?

• Go online to learn more about the measure, to contribute to the campaign, and to endorse the

campaign. See website below.

• Talk to your neighbors and friends, letting them know how important this issue is to you and to them. Remind them that the library's five sites had more than 500,000 visits last year, and that thousands of children, teens, and adults attend library programs yearly, or that three of our Library



- Order a yard sign supporting Measure X and post it prominently where your neighbors will see it.
- VOTE! The single most important thing you can do is VOTE! The measure needs to pass by a 2/3 vote. The ballot will be long and this and other local issues will come last.

PLEASE CHECK OUT THE MEASURE X WEBSITE: berkeleylibrariesyesonx.com

President's Annual Report

By Cathy Brown



The Friends Annual Membership Meeting, held on June 26, 2024, in Haver Hall of the Northbrae Community Church, was last convened in 2019. It's worth reviewing what's happened with the Friends over the last five years. Like many businesses, we had to close until it became safe enough to venture forth with masks and sanitizer, and until

the State allowed limited store visitations behind plastic barriers. We worried that our volunteers and customers might be reluctant to return under the circumstances. We need not have worried.

Practically all of our volunteers came back. Sometimes we forgot to strap on our masks; sometimes we flouted social distancing and hugged; and sometimes we banged our head against the plastic, but we returned to get the bookstores back in business. I cannot thank our volunteers enough — they are the engine that pulls the train. We really needed our volunteers to deal with the box cars of donated books. It

(cont'd page 3)



Supporting the Friends = Supporting the Library

Creating a great public library requires support from many sources. The Berkeley Public Library is fortunate to have many community supporters who firmly believe in the power of libraries. Your individual donations help keep Berkeley's library system vibrant and responsive.

New members

Edwin Herzog John Joseph Phyllis Orrick

In Memory and in honor

Pamela Doolan, in memory of Ray F. Doolan
Judith Lara, in memory of Michael Lara
Carolyn Kolka, in memory of Caroline Plant
Anna Presler, in memory of Linda Schieber
Carol Starr, in memory of Regina Minudri
with donation to Minudri Friends Staff Scholarship

Barbara Alesandrini, in honor of Sayre Van Young and Toni Klassen



Curious about the Process?

I recently received a query from a long-time Friend who wondered about the process for awarding the Library the money it receives from the Friends to fund public programming. Does the Friends issue a formal Request for Proposal? Does the Library respond with an exhaustive description of each program or event, and attach a line item budget?

The Friends invites the Library to make a presentation of their request and provide a written proposal at a Board meeting. We review the proposal, ask for clarification if needed, then we discuss the proposal among ourselves. Two meetings are required before voting on the proposal, per Friends bylaws. At the Friends May 2024 Board Meeting we approved a record \$175,600 gift to the Library – an astonishing amount!

The Friends put no constraints or requirements on Library programming. Discretion is left to the Library to use programming funds in ways that best serve the community. Staff provide the Friends Board with regular updates (and thanks!) related to programs and events. We think that the money we work hard to earn is exceptionally well-spent. We hope you agree!

—Cathy Brown, President

Members Renewed at \$25

Robert Banfiel
Eloise Bodine
Karen Branson
Barbara Braun
Judith and Burt Calder
Rosemary Campos
Joanna Dwyer
Rose Marie Ginsburg
Amy and George Gorman
Janet Homrighausen
Amy Ione
John and Nancy Lawrence

Judith Malamut

Linda Oliver Vicki Oswald Harriet Patto Marilyn Pew Harry Robertson Kaye Sankey Jane Scantlebury Elizabeth Sklut James Stark Marin Van Young Rob Walker Nancy Yates

Members Renewed Over \$25 up to \$200

Gertrude Allen Marcia Anderson Mariana Beatty Elizabeth Benjamine John and Debra Bennett Peter and Nancy Bickel Warren and Karen Bird Lucia Blakeslee Robert and Linda Carloni Roger and Ana Chretien Joan Collignon Zipporah Collins Josephe Curran Linda Deaktor Kevin Donahue Leslie Easterday Jeri Ewart Morris Friedell Barbara and Kevin Galvin Kristina Grondahl Ellen Hahn Charlene Harrington Robert and Karen Holtermann

John Kenny JoAnn and Martin Lorber Helen Marcus Bill Mayer Claire McGowan Sheila McCormick Wendy Polivka Therese Powell Thomas Sager Sondra Schlesinger Marian Wolfe and Scott Scheffler Reed Scmidt Marty Schiffenbauer Sheila Singleton Richard Stevens and Virginia Behm Kristin Stromberg Ann and Dickran Tashjian Neda Tomasevich **Emily Warden** Carolyn Weinberger Christine Williams Charles Wollenberg Hildred Yost

Members Renewed Above \$200

Ellen Barth Gary Brown Beth and Norman Edelstein

Norman Edelstein Terry Gillen William Hausle

Thomas Jones

Judith Justice Peggy Kirihara Linda and Steve Lazzareschi Lily Shih and Witt Monts

Larry Simon

President's Report, cont'd (from page 1)

seemed that we were the only organization accepting book donations, as I learned from people who drove in from Marin and points east. We obtained temporary storage from the City and ploughed through the boxes until they were empty. Bob Martin, who manages several shifts at the Channing store, tried a few experiments and innovations to keep the books flowing out and customers flowing in.

Sandy Bails, Channing Store Manager and a great group of shift managers rotated special sales to move clumps of similar donations —gardening, drama, parenting, and so on. During this time, with Board member Kristi Kenney leading the effort, we discovered the ability to take credit cards at the Channing store! Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks!

The Central Library store opened when the Library did and it has been chugging along, with weekly special sales organized by Store Manager Sayre Van Young. Amazon had only a small interruption in service—and then things really took off. It's a little mysterious how they screen, list, and sell books but the numbers don't lie—they know the secret.

Let us now praise *all* those who sort, shelve, sell, and flip thousands of books!

We held our Board meetings on Zoom—Roz Hardy was President during most of this time and I give her credit for continuing to lead the organization during this difficult time. Lucia Blakeslee figured out the Zoom magic and we continued our progress back to normal. We left Zoom behind in September 2022. The Big Sale resumed in 2023, much to the satisfaction of customers who left with bags and boxes of 50¢ books and media.

We celebrated our volunteers with an in-person Volunteer Appreciation Event in the Fall of 2023. It was truly heartwarming to see how many volunteers came

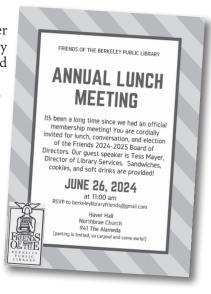
We participated in the Bay Area Book Festival when it resumed in in 2023. We attended and tabled at Library events, of which there were many. As members, you received your newsletter, the *Bookmark*, four times a year under the creative editorship of Sayre Van Young, girl reporter.

You renewed your membership, and we appreciate that. And now, with this meeting, the cornerstone of our member appreciation is back in place.

The Friends came through the pandemic in a great position— able to gift the Library with increasing sums to support their programming needs. If you look at page 7 of this newsletter, you'll see a financial snapshot of the Friends past fiscal year. I have the pleasure of reporting that for the third year in a row we grossed over a quarter of a million dollars. Our revenue stream is comprised of membership dues, donations

over and above dues, a nominal amount of interest from savings, and the vast majority is from book and media sales. This is an absolutely remarkable number considering that most of the used books we sell range from 50¢ cents to \$3. After expenses, we gifted

the Library \$150,600 for programming and we awarded a record number of scholarships to Library staff. We also helped fund Berkeley Unified School District's No More Summer Slide, and we were a major sponsor of the Foundation's fabulous Authors Dinner. Sharp eyes will note that our expenses (gifts and operational) exceeded our income. Over the COVID years we built up a substantial balance and now we are spending it down.



The Friends Board of Directors is responsible for allocating our revenue in a way that supports our mission of supporting the Library. The slate of directors proposed for 2024-2025 has been approved by the membership. We're delighted to welcome back Lucia Blakeslee as our Recording Secretary. Like many of our Board Members, Lucia wears a number of hats, including volunteer coordinator. Welcome to William Hausle, a new at-large member....

I would also like to recognize Mara Melandry, ex-officio board member who wrangles the membership database, produces the labels for the newsletter, follows up with lapsed members, and acts as intermediary with the Post Office, a really important responsibility.

As I have expressed before, this is a hard-working Board, and I am honored to serve with them.

For members and volunteers alike, there is no shortage of worthy causes, and we are grateful that you choose to support the Berkeley Public Library and the Friends with your contribution.

(Editor's note:) At the conclusion of the annual report, Cathy introduced guest speaker, Tess Mayer, Director of Library Services, who spoke of the Library's challenges during the pandemic. She noted that while the phrase "libraries are not just books" was perhaps overused and stating the obvious, the Library's role in fostering community through service (events, programs, gatherings, and yes, books) is undeniable.

The Friends presented Tess with a framed David Lance Goines poster as thanks, and in tribute to her leadership.

Welcome to William Hausle,

New Board Member (and treasurer in training)

We asked William, elected to the Board at June's Membership meeting, to tell us a little about how he became interested in the Friends.



If first learned about the Friends a few summers ago while an old friend was visiting. As we walked around Berkeley, he insisted that we step into the first floor of a dimly lit parking garage. Rarely do parking garages have a great impact on my life, so what a surprise and delight for me to find the Friends' Channing Way bookstore that day.

"Somehow, I had managed to live nearby for nearly a decade without even knowing about it. I jumped at the opportunity to volunteer, and of course, to spend more time with books!

"I grew up in a small town in Texas along the Mexican border. After stints in Austin and Chicago, I landed in the Bay Area. I've taught sixth graders, processed medical insurance claims, tutored community college students, prepared tax returns, documented disappearing German dialects, built educational software, and collected survey data for the Census Bureau. Most importantly, I've had the pleasure and good fortune to work the Thursday afternoon shift at the Channing Store with Marilyn, Judy, Sam, Emily, Barbara, Margi, and Sayre. I'm excited to take the next step in supporting the Friends by joining the Board."

NEW!

Sunday Hours at Two Branches

Beginning September 8th, two branches will now be open on **Sundays** from 10am-6pm.

Tarea Hall Pittman South

1901 Russell Street (on MLK, near the Ashby BART station)

North

1170 The Alameda

We look forward to serving you all weekend long!

The Roots of Literacy: Books from Birth are Best

by Helen Marcus and Seena Hawley

Sammy, age 18 months, waits impatiently with happy anticipation as a package addressed to him arrives at his doorstep. He knows what's inside. It's a book, with his name on the mailing label.

This scenario plays out every month in Sammy's home, thanks to free monthly book deliveries courtesy of the Berkeley Baby Book Project (BBBP), an East Bay nonprofit that enrolls children from birth to just shy of age 5 to receive free, new books by mail every month.



The Berkeley Baby Book Project

Since its 2012 founding in Berkeley by Seena Hawley, a former elementary school teacher, The BBBP's Programs have expanded to serve Emeryville, Richmond and San Pablo. All

children under 5 in those areas are eligible for monthly book mailings based only on their age and home address.

This year alone over 15,500 books have been mailed to East Bay children in our Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (IL) Programs. Monthly books now go to 900 children in Berkeley, 265 in Emeryville, and 738 in Richmond-San Pablo.

Ownership of books from birth is proven to increase school readiness and literacy. Providing chil-

dren 0-5 with age-appropriate books from IL is economical, efficient—and joyful. The words "Joy" and "Excitement", along with reports of increased reading time occur year after year in our Parent Surveys.

The BBBP pays IL for books mailed to children enrolled in the Program along with all other costs of running a nonprofit. Our outreach targets low-income families directly and through Programs



that serve them, like Head Start and the WIC (Women, Infants & Children) Program. We are proud of our Berkeley roots, and of making the IL Program available here and beyond.

Our funding comes largely from people who value literacy. Help us keep our IL Programs going and growing by donating! Our website thebbbp.org has a Donate button, current IL Book Lists, and more.

What?! The Friends Sell Books on Amazon?

By Sandy Bails (former Friends president and Channing Way Store Manager)

Perhaps you've wondered, even considered the possibility...and then dismissed the idea as unlikely? Well, we'd like to set the record straight; the Friends do sell a certain number of books online.

I hesitate to actually say the word "Amazon" out loud, but Amazon is indeed the online marketplace we use. One way to think about it, if you share the concerns we have about drumming independent booksellers out of business, is that Amazon is our landlord. We are one of many (likely many thousands) of small

online "storefronts." Amazon created the structure in which we exist, and we pay a nominal "rent," but we are not otherwise entangled with them. Amazon has its own very much bigger online "bookstore." We do not hand over books to Amazon to sell, but post our listings on our own site, package the books that sell, and send them off to new owners.



This all got set up over a decade ago, when a savvy volunteer at our Channing bookstore noted we had received a number of donated books that we would probably never sell because they were too specialized or potentially too expensive for the shoppers who would drop into the Channing store... which, to be fair, is in a somewhat dim "arcade" of shops on the street level of a public parking garage. Rodeo Drive this is not.

In addition, there is no easy and affordable way to announce to the world that we are in possession of an apparently untouched book of full-color reproductions of Vermeer's paintings, or a book that contains drawings of the original plans for the Panama Canal, or a first edition of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*.

The aforementioned savvy volunteer figured out how to set up an online bookshop for the Friends in the Amazon marketplace, so now these unusual and often expensive books (think \$50, think \$250!) are out there for anyone to consider buying. And indeed, by now we have probably sold books to someone in every state and U.S. territory.

Since we began doing this, our revenue has steadily increased from online sales, and this is important. The Friends fund the free community programming at all five library sites, contribute significantly to capital campaigns when some expensive project or remodel has to be undertaken, and offers grants to

Library staff who are engaged in academic pursuits. We're especially proud to be a major supporter of Berkeley's No More Summer Slide program that aims to keep at-risk elementary school kids connected to books over the summer by providing them with small personal libraries of new books.

More than 90 volunteers work in shifts at our two physical bookstores—a small one in the Central Library, and a much larger one on Channing Way. No one earns a salary, whether they sign up for a 2-hour

shift at Central or put in 16 hours a week at Channing. Plus, we have expenses that must be covered—rent and utilities, and occasional cleaning at Channing, plus computers, monitors, and printers, and a variety of stationery supplies at both stores. (Have you noticed those little colored dots on the spines of books we sell?

That's our incredibly sophisticated inventory system—and those dots are not inexpensive.)

Everyone with a beating heart roots for the success of independent bookstores. Indeed, we often do business with Moe's when we have more-expensive vintage books. And any number of small independent booksellers come to our stores to stock their own shelves, and more power to them!

Have we mentioned our ridiculously low prices? Most hardcover books are \$2 to\$ 3.50; most trade paperbacks are just \$2. Our prices have been steady over the last decade, and we can maintain these low prices, in part, because our net is spread pretty wide online, and the woman who has been looking for the book on birds in northeastern Arkansas sees we have just what she's been looking for and is delighted to fork over \$19 for it.

(Editor's note): One more thing—you may be wondering, "But why Amazon? There are other online booksellers." Indeed, there are, but Amazon is the only online marketplace that provides a ranking indicating a book's sale prospects—essentially the popularity of a book. Given our extremely cramped storage space, we need to concentrate on the books that are most likely to sell.

September, 2024 5

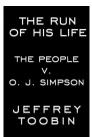
Friends Don't Let Friends Miss Good Books!

Read a good book lately? Every issue we feature brief comments from Friends about their latest bibliographic finds. If you have enjoyed a book, fiction or nonfiction, bestseller, or hidden treasure, for adults or children, please let us know (in 75 words or less!).

Friend Mara Melandry asks, "Who can resist true crime books?"

And suggests *The Run of His Life: The People v. O J. Simpson* by Jeffrey Toobin. (2015).

"With the recent death of O.J. Simpson, I reread one of the books written after his trial in 1996 for the



murder of his ex-wife Nicole and her friend Ronald Goldman. Author Toobin reviews the evidence and evaluates the cases made by both the prosecution and the defense. In what probably should have been an openand-shut case since literally all the evidence pointed to O.J. as the mur-

derer, the defense very cleverly implied that the LA Police Department framed O.J.; they suggested that the evidence, especially the DNA., had been contaminated on purpose to incriminate him. And the famous bloody glove: who can forget Johnnie Cochran saying, "If the glove doesn't fit, you must acquit." Which is what the jury did. What I find so interesting about the true crime genre is how the lawyers operate to either convict or exonerate the accused, what their tactics are, and how they interpret the evidence and especially their emotional appeals to the juries."

James Christiano (age 10), is the grandson of longtime Librarian and Friend, Jane Scantlebury. James really enjoyed *Olivetti* by Allie Millington (2024).



"Olivetti is a great book. It is told from the perspective of an Olivetti typewriter and a boy named Ernest Brindle. When the mom, Beatrice Brindle, sells Olivetti to Heartland Pawn Shop for one hundred and twenty-six dollars, and then goes missing, her family knows that something is up. Then Ernest notices

Olivetti in the pawn shop and Olivetti does the impossible and types back to Ernest, claiming that he can help them find Beatrice. So, Ernest steals Olivetti from the pawn shop. When the daughter of the pawn shop owner accuses Ernest of stealing the Olivetti, he is forced to show her what Olivetti can do. She ends up joining Ernest and his family's search to find Beatrice.

This book is super fun, and totally moved me. Another fun fact about the book is that Allie Millington originally wrote the book on her own antique typewriter."

Letters, We Get Letters...We Get Lots and Lots of Letters...

(*Editor's note*): OK, maybe not lots but a couple. If you like something in the newsletter, or wish we'd have an article about something, or are cranky about something, please drop us a line. FYI the two letters below have been slightly edited for length.

Hi folks!

Just received your newsletter, thanks for sending. I see you've updated my address, and that my fees/donation got to you. I love the newsletter...still reading from Portland, Oregon. I have our world-famous Powell's Books right up the block, and the Portland central library too not too far away. Still love the taste of Berkeley in your newsletters! Take care, keep up the awesome work; sounds like you've got a lot going on.

—Longtime Friend Bettina Roth

Dear Editor,

I always love getting my *Bookmark* and reading it cover to cover. I am so sorry to miss the membership meeting especially the opportunity to hear from Tess Mayer. However, I will be in good company in San Diego, attending the American Library Association annual conference.

The "Don't Miss Good Books" column always gives me good hints of books to add to my ever-growing list of titles to watch for at the store. The last issue even had 2 titles I have read and enjoyed. Joe Morganti's review of What Are You Looking for in the Library perfectly summarizes a very intriguing novel. I read Mara Melandry's suggestion (And I Alone Survived) years ago when the book first came out. It's a riveting narrative of the author's astonishing survival after a plane crash.

Thank you for your astute editing of the *Bookmark*.

—Channing bookstore volunteer Ellie Goldstein-Erickson 🖪



Editor: Sayre Van Young Layout/Design: Ann Higgins

The Bookmark appears quarterly; we welcome your letters & your ideas for articles. Contact us at Friends Bookmark, 2090 Kittredge, Berkeley, CA 94704, or via e-mail: berkeleylibraryfriends@gmail.com

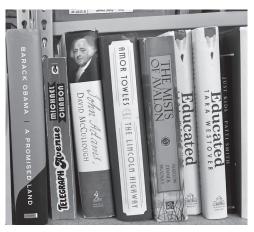
Editorial Meanderings, Maunderings, & Mumblings...

In which your editor confides, educates, resolves, and generally chats about many interesting and diverse items pertaining to the friendliest bookstores around, the bookstores' renowned volunteers and esteemed customers, the services and nuances of Berkeley's beloved Public Library, plus ever so much more.

Whew: The Big Sale is Over!

Once more we survived June's Big Book Sale and I hope you had a chance to drop by. Total was a well-earned \$3,686.22; more than 25 volunteers helped out and a huge thanks to them all.

You May Have Wondered About the Book Selection For the Sale



To be assured of having enough books, we start setting aside sale possibilities in January. By June this year, not only did we have hundreds of books to sell, but we also had a good idea of what Berkeley

readers have read and were now willing to part with. We lost track of exact numbers, but multiple copies (4+) of the books noted below were donated.

Alexander Hamilton by Ron Chernow Educated: A Memoir by Tara Westover Hillbilly Elegy A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis by J. D. Vance

John Adams by David McCullough

The Light We Carry: Overcoming in Uncertain Times by Michelle Obama

The Lincoln Highway: A Novel by lAmor Towles Mists of Avalon by Marion Zimmer Bradley Old Filth by Jane Gardam

The Overstory: A Novel by Richard Powers A Promised Land by Barak Obama

The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz, by Erik Larson

Team of Rivals—The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln by Doris Kearns Goodwin

Telegraph Avenue by Michael Chabon

The Thurber Carnival by James Thurber (1945 edition)

Plus, anything written by Malcolm Caldwell

There's More To Talk About Than Books...

How about plumbing? If you've visited the Channing store in recent months, you couldn't miss the torn-up walkway and deep rocky pit leading to the Channing Bookstore. There've been flooding issues and drainage problems for years in our cozy mall (remember the Great Flood of 2007?), and the City has worked and worked to figure out the problem(s). At last, diagnosis attained, the City was ready to go to work. We closed for four days as did most of the stores in the mall. As Sandy Bails put it in an e-mail to Channing's volunteers: "Store Managers are agreed that the description of the [expected] scene in the Channing garage next Tuesday-Friday will not provide us with the ambiance we require to do our best work. So, we'll officially close those days."

Open now, do drop by!

Friends of the Berkeley Public Library Fiscal Year End Report 2023-2024

INCOME

TOTAL INCOME	\$270,628.31
Saving Account Interest	77.23
Regina Minudri Scholarship Fund	1,000.00
Donations	42,874.59
Memberships	7,175.00
Big Book Sale, etc.)	
Book Selling (Bookstores, Amazon,	\$219,501.49

EXPENSES (Operational and Gift)

OPERATIONAL EXPENSES

TOTAL OPERATIONAL EXPENSES	\$80,966.32
All Volunteer Meeting	411.80
Publicity	639.18
Membership	597.65
Newsletter	5,407.71
Administration	4,985.02
Book Selling	\$68,924.96

GIFTS

TOTAL GIFTS	\$219,100,00
No More Summer Slide (BUSD)	14,000.00
Library Scholarships	21,000.00
Library Gift Fund	150,600.00
Foundation Authors Dinner	\$33,500.00

TOTAL OPERATIONAL/GIFT EXP \$300,066.32

Friends of the Berkeley Public Library 2090 Kittredge Street Berkeley, California 94704

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Friends of the Berkeley Public Library Board of Directors, 2024-25

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• Sayre Van Young • Rob Walker

Advisory Committee Chairs and Coordinators:

Publicity/Outreach, Sandy Bails

Membership, Mara Melandry (ex officio)

Scholarship, Judith Justice Bookmark Editor: Sayre Van Young

Stay in touch with the Friends:

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Central Library Workroom/Office (510) 981-6152

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